



KENTUCKY

# General News

December 2008

## Kentucky Reaches \$12-million Settlement Over Lead Paint-Tainted Toys



Attorney General Jack Conway, along with the attorneys general of 38 other states, has reached a settlement agreement with Mattel, Inc. and Fisher-Price, Inc., its subsidiary, resolving a 16-month long investigation that resulted in a voluntary recall of the company's toys due to excessive lead paint in 2007. The agreement requires Mattel to make a payment of \$12 million by January 30, 2009, to be divided among the participating states. As one of the lead states on the multistate executive committee, Kentucky will receive \$475,000.

"No child should be at risk because of toxic chemicals in their toys. I will continue to press the federal government and toy manufacturers on the issue to prevent tainted toys from falling into the hands of Kentucky kids," said General Conway.

From August 2, 2007 through October 25, 2007, the United States Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) announced recalls of approximately 2 million Mattel and Fisher-Price toys for excessive lead in surface coatings. The recalls included nearly 100 different products manufactured in China.

The agreement reached by the attorneys general also includes more stringent standards for accessible lead both in surface coatings and other materials effective for toys manufactured after November 30, 2008.

General Conway strongly encourages parents to consult the Consumer Product Safety Commission recall notices to determine if their children's toys have been recalled due to lead content or other safety concern. A link to that website is available at [www.ag.ky.gov](http://www.ag.ky.gov). Consumers call also call the CPSC recall hotline at the CPSC website to determine if their children's toys have been recalled due to lead content or any other safety concern.

For more information — <http://tinyurl.com/739yue>

## Counting Our Blessings

Rather than exchanging gifts within the office, Attorney General Conway and his staff decided instead to remember those who are struggling this holiday season. General Conway and his office donated money to provide gifts for four angels from the Salvation Army Angel Tree. With the money collected, OAG employees were able to purchase a bike, a coat, shoes, an outfit and toys for each of the four children.

"It just made sense," General Conway said. "I know this year has been difficult for many Kentucky families, and our office felt it was time to count our blessings and help those in need during the holiday season."

General Conway also encourages others, if they are able to help, to remember citizens in need within their communities.



Kentucky Attorney General  
Jack Conway



## Economic Downturn Sparks Rise in Scam Reports

Attorney General Conway cautions Kentuckians to be on guard against those trying to profit from the ailing economy. The Office of the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Division is receiving more scam-related calls from concerned consumers. General Conway said Kentuckians struggling to make ends meet can easily fall victim to con artist's gimmicks.

"I encourage citizens to be extra vigilant when considering foreclosure help, work-at-home offers and sweepstakes or lotteries. If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is."

Consumers should also be on guard against fraudulent charities this holiday season.

"At a time when so many families are struggling, it is more important than ever to support reputable, well-established charities that truly make a difference in our local communities," General Conway said. "However, consumers should be mindful that there are irresponsible, even fraudulent charities that abuse the public's trust and deprive the needy."

The following are important tips for consumers:

- ▶ **Charitable solicitors** – Be cautious of sound-alike charities and solicitors unable to answer questions. Always ask the solicitor what percentage of your dollar goes to the cause. Ask for written information so that you can research the charity through the Office of the Attorney General at [www.ag.ky.gov](http://www.ag.ky.gov) or the Better Business Bureau before giving.
- ▶ **Sweepstakes and lotteries** – The Attorney General's Office receives several calls daily regarding foreign lotteries and sweepstakes. Some consumers receive what appears to be a legitimate check to assist them in paying "fees and taxes." These checks are counterfeit and should NOT be cashed. Additionally, money should NOT be wired to any sweepstakes promoter. It is illegal.
- ▶ **Foreclosure help** – Con artists prey on consumers struggling to pay their mortgages by offering help for a fee. These offers are often found in classified ad sections and tabloids, but can also come by mail or telephone. These offers are often bogus and seldom result in legitimate help. If you are in danger of foreclosure, contact Protect My Kentucky Home at 866-830-7868 for assistance.
- ▶ **Work-at-home offers** – Beware of ads appearing in classified ad sections of the newspaper and tabloids or offers by mail or phone. Applying for jobs online sometimes results in your receiving emails indicating that you can work from home and serve as a money "processor" for an out-of-the-country company, or a "customer service representative." These offers are bogus and involve processing checks or money orders and wiring money to an unknown source. The checks are counterfeit and you will be held liable for the funds at the bank.

If you have been a victim of a consumer scam or want to check on a company or report suspicious companies, please contact the Office of the Attorney General's Consumer Protection Hotline at 888-432-9257.

For more information — <http://tinyurl.com/9trx7o>

## General Conway Selected as Aspen Rodel Fellow

Attorney General Conway is one of 24 elected public officials in the country to be chosen as an Aspen Rodel Fellow. Members of the 2008 class of Fellows were selected on their reputation for intellect, thoughtfulness and bipartisan approach to governing.

"I am honored to be chosen for this prestigious Fellowship and look forward to working with other young leaders from across the country as we search for bipartisan solutions to real challenges that face our states and communities," General Conway said.

The Aspen Institute-Rodel Fellowships in Public Leadership program, established in 2005, works to enhance American democracy by convening the nation's most promising young political leaders in a casual, bipartisan setting to explore the underlying values and principles of western democracy, the relationship between individuals and their community, and the responsibilities of public leadership.

The 2008 class of Fellows is non-partisan and represents Fellows from 22 states, serving at both local and state levels of government.

### Attorney General Conway Issues Refund Checks To Kentuckians Misled By Purported Veterans Charity

On December 23, General Conway issued refund checks totaling nearly \$10,000 to 558 Kentuckians who made donations to the American Veterans Coalition. General Conway announced a settlement on December 10 with the Washington-based charity that claimed to raise funds to help pay veterans' expenses but ultimately gave less than 1% of the money raised to veterans.

"Kentuckians gave to the American Veterans Coalition with the belief that their contributions would help those who have sacrificed so much for our country. Unfortunately, they were misled. I am pleased that we were able to recover the money and that we can now return it to the families who gave so generously," said General Conway.

In the settlement, American Veterans Coalition and its principal operators, Robert Friend, Jr. and Shao Mei Wang, were barred from soliciting contributions in the Commonwealth of Kentucky for 10 years. The settlement also required the charity to refund \$9,927.50, the entire amount raised in Kentucky, as restitution.

The Office of the Attorney General alleged the American Veterans Coalition violated the Consumer Protection Act by making false and misleading statements to donors about how contributions would be used. Investigators report that the Coalition misled donors into believing that a substantial amount of their donations would be spent on providing financial assistance to veterans. Of the \$1,239,812 raised nationally in 2006, the group only spent \$7,400 in financial assistance to veterans.